

Amherst Charter Commission Minutes 7/26/17

MEETING TIME: 7:00 pm.

Police Station Community Room

Agenda

LIST OF TOPICS: 1. Call to order, approve agenda, approve minutes 2. Public comment 3. Planning: outreach, feedback, future meetings, publication, etc. 4. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to the meeting 5. Adjourn

Members Present: Andy Churchill, Nick Grabbe, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Irv Rhodes, Diana Stein.

Members Absent: Tom Fricke, Meg Gage, Julia Rueschemeyer, Gerry Weiss

Minutes for the meetings of June 7, 22 and 28 and July 3, 5, 10, 12 and 13 were approved.

The public hearing will be Aug. 31 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Town Room of Town Hall. Hanneke asked if the Commission should seek input on specific areas such as two-year terms, the size of the council, the ZBA size, and electing or appointing Housing Authority and Redevelopment Authority members. Grabbe said that if there is no specific request, most comments will be just supporting or attacking the Charter. Stein said she doesn't want to focus on one thing when residents' concerns might be something else.

Stein said members should not talk much at the hearing. Rhodes said he's been surprised that residents are confused about the new precinct map, and suggested giving it out as a handout at the hearing. Rhodes added that the Commission should be prepared for questions about the comparative costs of the new form and current form of government. Grabbe agreed to research this question, with help from Paul Bockelman and Alissa Brewer. He asked if he should factor in participatory budgeting or the community participation officer, and was told that he should not.

On the ZBA question, Stein said the big problem is finding people willing to serve. Churchill said

the reason for increasing membership from three to five is that with three, most votes must be unanimous, so one person can decide the issue. Churchill said the Commission will reconsider its recommendation after the public hearing.

Hanneke said that 8,000 households will receive copies of the Charter with the Bulletin or Gazette Aug. 3, and there are 500 copies in Town Hall waiting for distribution.

The final version of the Charter must be sent to the Select Board and state officials Sept. 29. Sept. 25 was selected as the date for a final vote on the Commission. A final report (nine pages with the last Charter Commission) and a minority report (1,000 words maximum) must be written. Churchill, Grabbe and Fricke will meet to work on the final report, with a preliminary draft done by Aug. 29. The final report of the last Charter Commission included sections on what's new and why, representing the will of the people, executive leadership, what's familiar and what's improved, strengthening local democracy.

Hanneke mailed the preliminary Charter to the Attorney General's office July 25, and it must respond within 30 days. It was agreed that the Commission will meet to discuss the Attorney General's report Sept. 7, 14 and 18 at 5:30, with consultants asked to come to the meeting on Sept. 7.

Hanneke asked if there should be another informal feedback session in the daytime for those who can't make it to the public hearing. Possible dates are Sept. 5 and 6 and Aug. 31. She said she has put up a generic feedback form on the web site.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nick Grabbe